

FOREIGN WRITERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

The Past: Thirty-odd writers from abroad have participated in the Fiction and Poetry Workshops at the University of Iowa in recent years. They have come from Europe, Turkey, India, Pakistan, Korea, China, Japan and the Philippines. All who have completed their studies have returned to their own countries. Some have published books. Some teach. Others are editing literary and other magazines.

This Year: On campus now are a Pole, a Turk, a Korean poet, four Chinese, a Frenchwoman, two Britons and an Indian. Another Korean poet is en route. Foreign writers write in their own languages, but translate their work into English for criticism, and, sometimes, for publication in this country. The newest activity in the program is the Translation Workshop, which teams a foreign writer with an American counterpart. In process now in the Translation Workshop are a collection of new French poetry (to be published in the fall), a collection of Bengali poetry, and an anthology of contemporary Chinese verse, some of which will appear in Poetry magazine.

The Future: The Iowa City program for writers from abroad has been conducted with almost no assistance from the government or the large foundations. Most of the funds have been raised from firms and individuals in Iowa. If, however, this program is to expand -- and the evidence suggests that it would be to our national interests to see it expand -- or even to continue at its present level, it will require financial support.

The Creative Writing Programs at Iowa could provide individual and intensive guidance to up to twenty-five writers from abroad in one academic year. (Total enrollment in the programs is 150.) A program of these dimensions

would provide a representative geographic "mix" which would be as stimulating to all of the young writers at Iowa as it would be profitable to the American interest. The following suggested geographic distribution is highly tentative:

<u>Western Europe</u>	5
<u>Eastern Europe</u>	2
<u>Africa</u>	3
<u>Latin America</u>	6
<u>South Asia</u>	3
(Pakistan 1)	
(India 1)	
<u>Far East</u>	6
(Japan 2)	
(Southeast Asia 2)	
(Hongkong/Taiwan 1)	
(Philippines 1)	

It might not be possible to increase the program to this size within a single year. However, it is a reasonable proposition to plan to bring fourteen or fifteen writers from abroad to Iowa for the 1964-65 academic year. How could this be done?

1. Travel Costs. Fulbright travel grants could be a principal means. Six grants apparently will be available for the Far East. Asia Foundation representatives in several countries have indicated a willingness to provide travel grants.

2. Tuition. Means can be found in Iowa City to provide or waive this for most foreign students.

3. Living Expenses. The foreign writer in Iowa City can live modestly but without hardship for \$2,000 a year. This totals \$30,000 for fifteen students.

One means of providing maintenance for a foreign writer for a year at Iowa might be to modify the conventional Foreign Specialist Grant to supply the grantee with \$200 a month for ten months instead of per diem (of \$16 per day?) for ninety days.

Administration could properly be cited as a fourth cost, human as well as financial. Fund-raising and correspondence with possible participants and with agencies of the government here and in the field already require a dismaying amount of time. Hopefully, it will be possible to find some help in coping with this. An additional teacher to devote himself full-time to foreign participants would cost about \$12,000. If the program reaches a level of 25 foreign participants a year, an administrative assistant and secretary (\$6,500 and \$3,300) would be helpful.

Selection of Candidates. This process would be undertaken with the help of USIS posts, Asia Foundation field representatives, and other agencies and individuals likely to know something about young talents in a given country. Some nominations would come from American writers who have traveled abroad and from established foreign writers. No participant in the writing workshops at Iowa is accepted until staff members have read samples of his work. Nominees would thus be required to submit samples of their writing in English translation for careful evaluation before formal admission to the program. Grants would be for one academic year. Renewals would be considered only where the participant is engaged on a work of visible substance requiring more than the normal one-year period to complete.

Emphasis will be on the young writer who has written and published enough to prove his talent, rather than on the older and firmly established writer.

In the course of a year at the University of Iowa, international students of writing would not only receive help with their own work, but would learn a great deal about American literature. They would also discover the variety of contemporary American activity in all of the arts through the excellent facilities in the University theatre, its internationally known Department of Art, and its fine musical groups. This persuades the visiting writer that the culture of this country is not confined to New York but is widely diffused.